

## Message Text

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71

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 USIA-15 TRSE-00 SAJ-01 SS-20

NSC-07 OMB-01 ACDA-19 MC-02 DRC-01 /121 W

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R 161811Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0432

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

SECDEF

USNMR SHAPE

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 06144

VIENNA FOR MBFR DEL

SHAPE FOR INTAF

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, MILI, PARM, UK

SUBJECT: BRITISH DEFENSE REVIEW

REF: (A) BONN 7789; (B) LONDON 6076

1. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE NEWS ITEM REPORTED REF (A) DERIVES FROM A 10 MAY PRESS BACKGROUNDER BY CHANCELLOR HEALEY (REF B) DURING WHICH HE COMPARED BRITAIN'S "IN-EQUITABLY HEAVY" DEFENSE BURDEN WITH ITS DIFFICULT ECONOMIC SITUATION AND CONCLUDED THAT REDUCTIONS IN NATO COMMITTED FORCES (INCLUDING BAOR) ARE INEVITABLE. HEALEY REPORTEDLY STRESSED THAT NO REDUCTIONS OF THIS SORT WOULD BE MADE WITHOUT FULL CONSULTATION WITH THE ALLIES; NEVERTHELESS, HE BELIEVES THE DEFENSE REVIEW NOW IN PROCESS CAN ONLY COME TO THIS CONCLUSION.

2. HEALEY REPORTEDLY WENT ON TO CONSIDER THE EFFECTS OF  
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SUCH CUTS ON NATO, HYPOTHESIZED THAT BRITISH PULLOUTS --

ADDED TO THOSE THAT PROBABLY WILL FLOW FROM MBFR -- WOULD RENDER NATO'S STRATEGY OF "FLEXIBLE RESPONSE" UNREALISTIC, AND STATED HIS BELIEF THAT A NEW STRATEGY, POSSIBLY ALONG THE LINES OUTLINED IN THE FRANKFURTER RUNDSCHAU ARTICLE, WILL BE REQUIRED.

3. COMMENT: AS NOTED REF (B), THE BRITISH DEFENSE REVIEW WILL NOT BE COMPLETED UNTIL LATE SUMMER OR EARLY AUTUMN, AND DEFENSE SECRETARY MASON ALREADY APPEARS TO BE LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR AN MOD POSITION THAT OPPOSES ALL BUT MINIMAL CUTS. CHANCELLOR HEALEY'S MOVE FROM DEFENSE TO THE TREASURY HAS NOT INHIBITED HIM FROM SPEAKING OUT BOLDLY AND AUTHORITATIVELY ON DEFENSE MATTERS, HOWEVER, AND THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE VIEWS HE EXPRESSED LAST WEEK WILL HAVE STRONG SUPPORT WITHIN THE PARTY AND THE CABINET WHEN MAJOR DECISIONS ON FUTURE DEFENSE POLICY AND SPENDING ARE TAKEN LATER THIS YEAR.

SOHM

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